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ABSTRACT

Reporting on a rural planning and development program that proposes to develop, install, and evaluate alternative models for more effective collaboration and integration of the complex bureaucracies with responsibility for rural regions, this paper describes "Partnership for Rural Improvement" (PRI). Focusing on 11 counties in northcentral and northeastern Washington, the PRI intent is described as strengthening the capacity for development at two levels: in localities and regions, focusing on individual citizens, local officials, and members of local agencies as the principal actors; and in externally based support agencies or institutions which have specific responsibilities for assisting local people in the development process, focusing on agency or institutional professionals as the major actors (with particular emphasis on the capacity of educational institutions to provide short and long term services). Presenting an explanation of the rationale for alternative rural development models, this paper includes sections on: (1) the alternative development strategies (the Havelock, Rothman, Eberts, Moe and Tamblyn, and Mulford et al models); (2) the PRI model; (3) the PRI evaluation and research activities (process description and critical incident analysis; outcome analysis; pre- and post-measurements; assessment of effectiveness for specific events; focused evaluation events designed to review and adjust program direction; comparisons between geographic sub-regions; and assessment of the relative utility of the PRI model); (4) review of program progress. (JC)

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COLLABORATION AND INTEGRATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The emergence of complex bureaucratic systems in both public and private affairs has led to major shifts in social and economic organization within rural regions. A vast array of public and private agencies and organizations provide services to rural areas, but often in piecemeal approaches. Citizens and local public officials are confused and occasionally frustrated with the wide range of specialized agencies at county, regional, state, and federal levels with which they are required to interact (Tweeten and Brinkman, p. 55).

This paper reports on a rural planning and development program that proposes to develop, install, and evaluate alternative models for more effective collaboration and integration of the complex bureaucracies with responsibility for rural regions. The program (Partnership for Rural Improvement) is funded in part by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and focuses on 11 counties of northcentral and northeastern Washington as a region for testing the concepts and processes associated with the models.

The Partnership (PRI) intends to strengthen the capacity for achieving development at two levels: (1) in localities and regions, focusing on individual citizens, local officials, and members of local agencies as the principal actors; and (2) in externally based support agencies or institutions which have specific responsibilities for assisting local people in the development process, focusing on agency or institutional professionals as the major actors; the program particularly emphasizes increasing the capacity of educational institutions and individual faculty to provide services of immediate and long-term importance in realizing development opportunities.

Rationale for Alternative Rural Development Models

The altered matrix in which development can occur is an important issue in any revised conception of rural development. The individual and the community have been the traditional focal points for activities intended to stimulate improvement in rural conditions. Farm programs have supported individual or firm efforts to increase income, through price supports, conservation payments, and loan programs. Development programs have introduced projects that would produce "community" improvement through broadly based citizen problem solving groups, improved organization, or specific activities to alleviate sewer, water, or transportation problems.

These thrusts have tended to be limited in scope; that is, they have focused on the solution of a single problem or a narrow range of problems, (such as increasing farm income). Or, they have focused on single communities or small groups of communities, while failing to take sufficient account of the impacts and often over-riding influence of forces imposed from outside the locality. Regional development programs have tended to limit their concerns to physical or economic development issues, without sufficient attention to social and political development. Or, educational programs have been ineffectively designed to apply available knowledge about rural improvement (Tweeten and Brinkman, p. 411).

Development programs of this order have certainly helped many individuals and communities, but they have not achieved a sufficiently broad conception of social organization, nor taken account of the critical role that complex organizations play in generating or obstructing change. Many communities are caught up in an organizational matrix which influences development opportunity to a greater degree than local decisions. Officials and citizens

have influence, but many of the decisions which affect communities most decisively are made by firms, agencies, or other organizations based outside the local area (Warren, 1972).

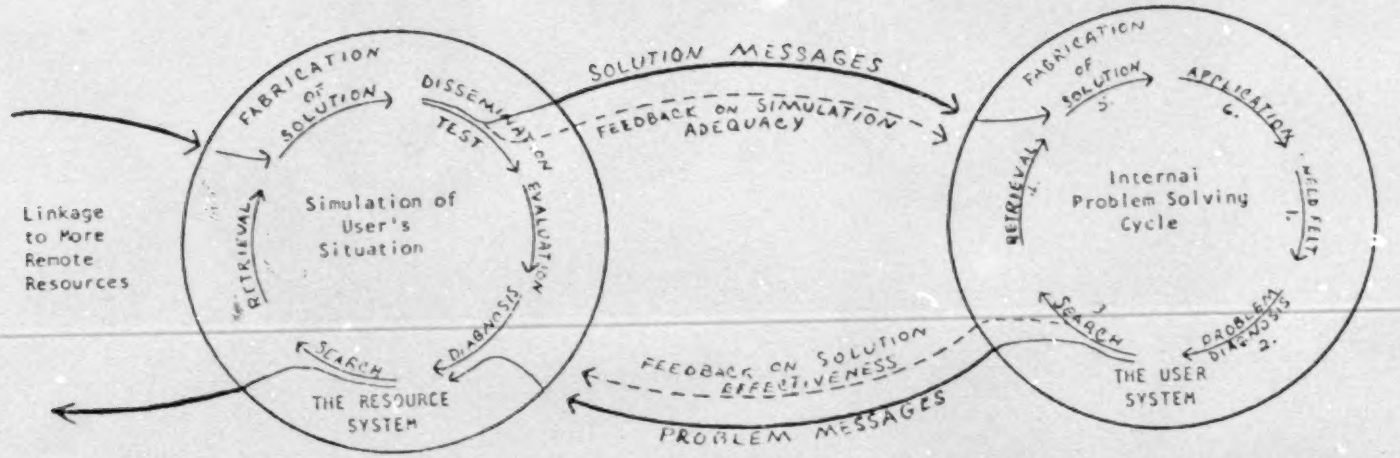
Local community institutions have gradually lost many functions formerly performed, while specialized public and private agencies have become more efficient in providing single services. Local leadership for solving specialized problems has been partially replaced by highly mobile professional problem-solvers who feel relatively little allegiance or responsibility to any single locality. Both professionals and local leaders have difficulty perceiving rural problems in a wholistic sense and fail to understand how the program for which they work is related to the programs of other agencies or communities. This suggests a potential need for new or adapted professional roles to strengthen or create linkages between communities and institutions, while filling a gap in the knowledge application process. (Williams, Youmans, and Sorensen, 1975, pp. 5-8; Moe and Tamblyn, 1974, pp. 13-14).

ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Not only is there a huge array of organizations and agencies impacting rural regions, but an equally broad assembly of models have been proposed for resolving the rural development dilemma. No attempt will be made here to thoroughly summarize and evaluate the full range of possibilities. Rather, we focus on those development models which are most closely related to the strategy emphasized in this paper.

Havelock (1969) developed a research utilization model which has been tested in a variety of circumstances but not (so far as we know) as a systematic process for rural development (Figure 1). The model emphasizes

Figure I. The Linkage Process



From the Linkage Perspective:

1. Resource system must recapitulate or adequately simulate the user's problem-solving process.
2. The user must be able to understand (and simulate) the research, development, and evaluation processes employed by the resource system in the fabrication of solutions.
3. Resource and user must provide reciprocal feedback.
4. Successful linkage experiences build channels for efficient dissemination.

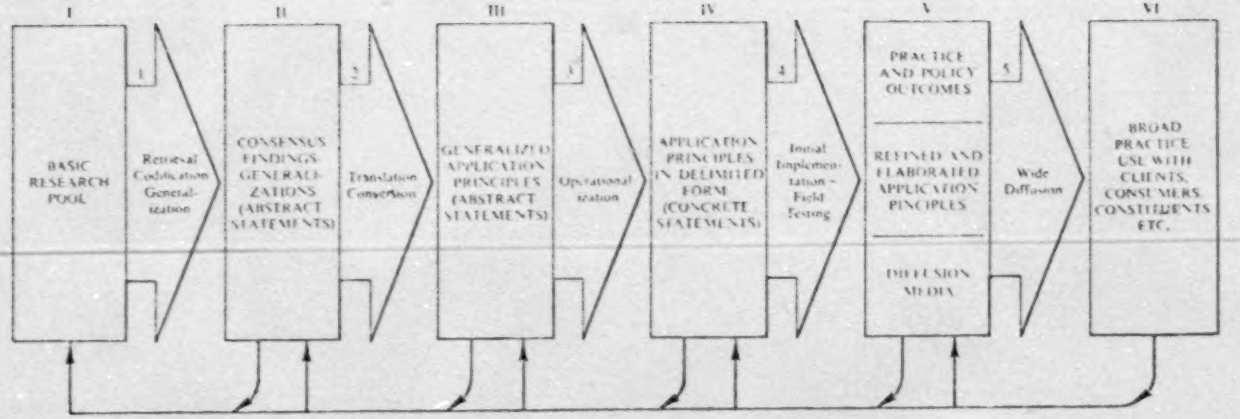
(Source: Havelock, 1969)

a problem or "user" orientation; a problem in need of resolution is defined by an individual or group, followed by systematic searching for knowledge and skills to resolve the issue.

Rothman extends the Havelock model to a scheme for deriving development principles from social science research (Figure II). He assumes a six stage process which begins with the basic knowledge pool and culminates with broad use of the knowledge (Rothman, 1974, p. 536). The rationale for the Rothman model arises from failure to systematically retrieve information from the basic research pool as a means to reach generalizations which can be translated or converted into more applied principles. These principles, Rothman suggests, can be experimentally operationalized through field testing. Results can be developed into refined and elaborated principles and then widely diffused and broadly used by individuals, groups, and organizations. The model has appeal because it assumes that knowledge can be systematically applied if an adequate process is developed.

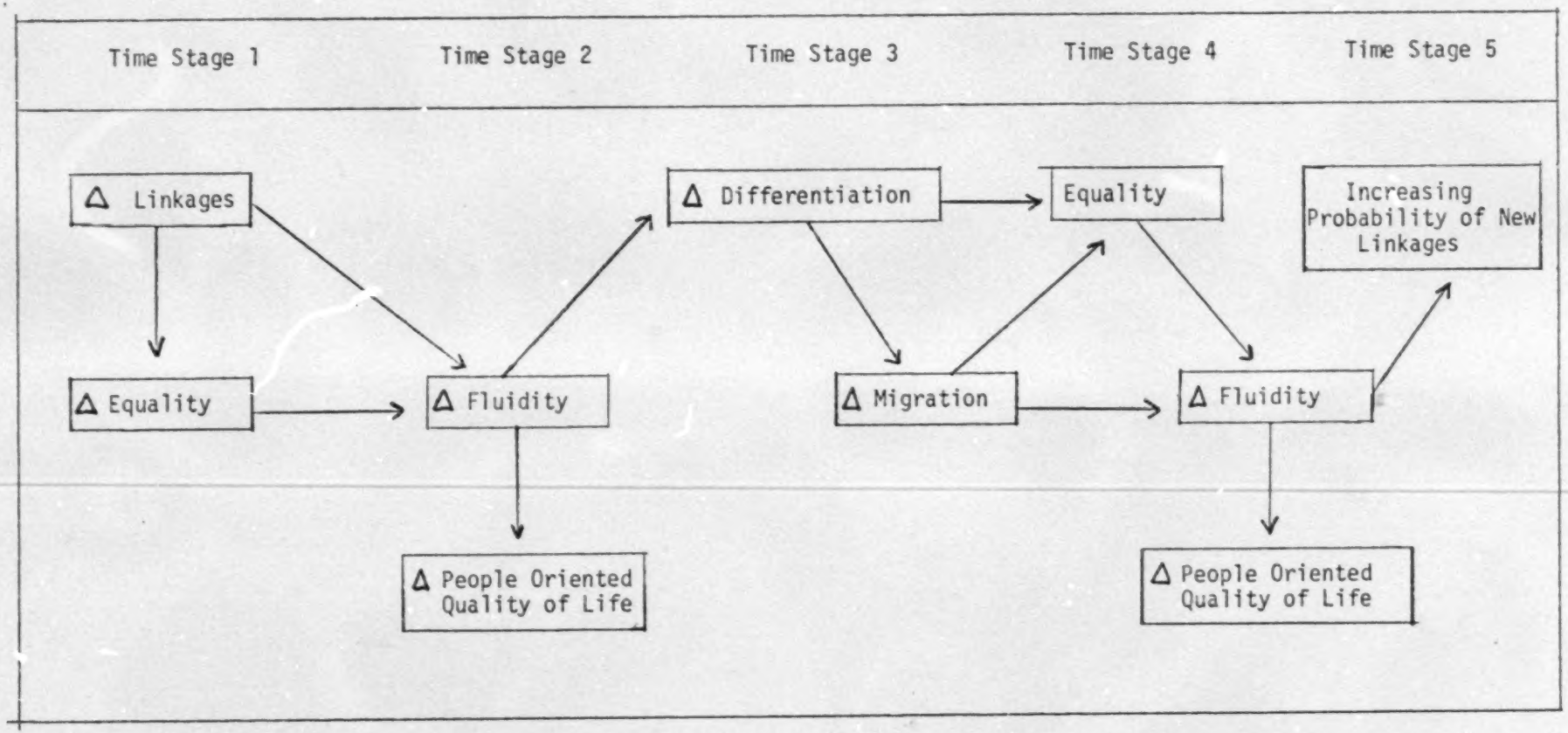
Eberts (1971) and Sismondo (1972, 1973) have developed and tested a model which focuses on community change, but which has implications for broader regional application (Figure III). The fundamental stimulus to development, they suggest, comes through the appearance of new formal linkages between communities and organizations (Sismondo, 1973, p. 31). Eberts tested the model empirically through analysis of data from a sample of non-metropolitan cities in New York State, and from a sample of 300 counties of the northeast United States. The essential requirement is that new organizational linkages are generated which lead to increases in equality and income. Increased

Figure II. Schematic Model of Research Utilization Process



(Source: Rothman, 1974, p. 536)

Figure III. A Proposed General Model of Community Macro-System Change



(Source: Eberts, 1971)

fluidity and consumer expenditures result and contribute to improved individual well-being and higher quality of life. The model assumes that any development program must begin with policy objectives which lead to changed structural conditions.

Moe and Tamblyn (1974) discuss requirements for design of rural development systems which include (1) increased problem solving and knowledge utilization capacity at the local level; (2) increased problem solving and knowledge utilization capacities in regional, state, and federal organizations which service local area; (3) strengthening of linkages among the levels so that the two-way exchange can occur; (4) research and development as an on-going process which will continuously enable individual communities and organizations to improve their development capacity; (5) and a revised organizational arrangement that makes use of the capabilities of public and private educational and research institutions. The new federal thrusts which encourage design of alternative models for rural development include, particularly, the Rural Development Act of 1972, the Revenue Sharing Acts of recent years, and assignment of specific responsibility for rural development with the Secretary of Agriculture at the national level.

Moe (1975) outlines a series of "rural development strategies," categorized into general types:

1. Rational-empirical, which emphasizes the use of knowledge and information as the critical input to effective development effort.

2. Normative-reeducative, which emphasizes the deliberate creation of new methods and rules, while helping people to learn the required changes

in values, behavior, and roles.

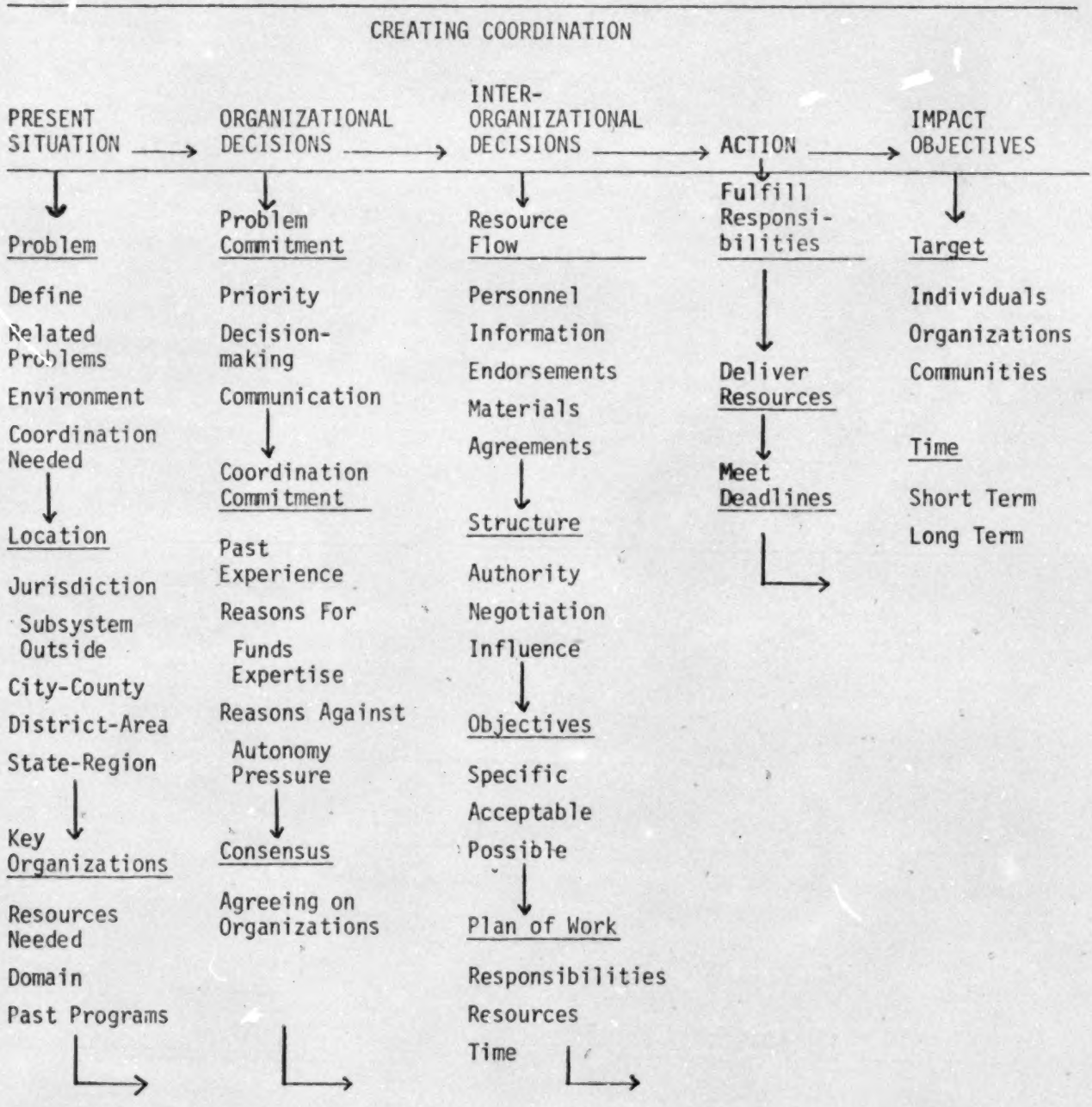
3. Cooperative-collaborative, emphasizing the design and inventing of new linking mechanisms and new organizational arrangements which make it possible for agencies or organizations with overlapping goals or functions to work together in goal achievement.

4. Power-coercive, focusing on rearranging the distribution of power and benefits in the process of development, through confrontation, conflict and formalized efforts to use judicial and legislative decisions as the means for redefining the rules under which society operates.

Moe suggests that none of the general strategies are adequate alone, but rather a set of strategies is needed which fits the prevailing conditions.

Mulford, Klonglan and others (1975) have developed a training process for creating interorganizational coordination. Part of their strategy involves a model which begins with analysis of the existing organizational arrangement, then initiates new organizational decision and action procedures intended to achieve specific impact objectives (Figure IV). They outline a ten step strategy beginning with problem definition in selected locations, identification of key organizations, securing organizational commitment to resolution of the problems, achieving agreement to coordinate organizational activities, securing consensus on the appropriate approach, reallocating resources from the coordinated agencies toward the achievement of the approach, developing an organizational or coordination structure (with three possible options) and finally initiating a set of interorganizational objectives which lead to a specific plan of work. The interorganizational coordination model has been

Figure IV. Model for Creating Interorganizational Coordination



(Source: Mulford, Klonglan, Winkelpleck and Warren, 1975)

implemented in a variety of circumstances, particularly in the civil defense establishment.

Rural economic development strategies of wide variety have been tested to examine their relevance and outcomes (Edwards, 1976). Economic analysis indicates that several strategies could improve per capita income, but each is accompanied by negative side effects. A combination of strategies seems to be the most reasonable and effective approach.

The Edwards study specifically notes that certain important issues are often left out of the economic analysis. For example, the economic models do not identify those institutions responsible for the strategies nor do they evaluate the cost of adopting the strategies. Furthermore, the institutional arrangements for evaluating goals to enable a community or region to cope with change or respond to adversity are not explicit.

Each of the approaches or models discussed above have potential for partially responding to rural development requirements. The PRI strategy draws from each model to institute and test an expanded conception of rural planning and development.

THE PARTNERSHIP FOR RURAL IMPROVEMENT MODEL

The intervention strategy begins with initiatives from educational institutions in consultation and joint planning with public agencies and local officials responsible to rural regions. Research and evaluation are an inherent part of the total enterprise so that new learning and further knowledge generation will occur.

The basic rationale for the program can be summarized briefly: The development potential of a region is limited in major part by internal and external resources available to it. Development of internal resources is dependent on the ability of governmental jurisdictions (counties, towns, cities) and nongovernment organizations to use external resources. Jurisdictions do not generally have sufficient internal resources to unilaterally generate development and are therefore dependent on external resources channeled through organizations (public and private) probably headquartered outside the jurisdiction or region. The outside agencies and organizations have professional and/or financial resources mandated for rural development but are dependent upon decisions in the local jurisdiction for the appropriate allocation of those resources.

Furthermore, the rural region, local jurisdictions and organizations are dependent upon conveners, educators, and continuing logistical support for collaboration. The assumption is that the desired output - rural development - will be greater as a consequence of collaborative interdependence and greater utilization of knowledge, in contrast to independent and unilateral actions taken separately by each agency or organization.

The descriptive scheme for the program is summarized in Figure V; the relationships between elements of the scheme are outlined in Figure VI; and the process design is elaborated in Figure VII. The descriptive scheme is derived from the models discussed in the previous section, and assumes that the ultimate goal of rural development is enhancement of the quality of life for individual citizens and preservation or improvement of environmental

Figure V. Descriptive Scheme

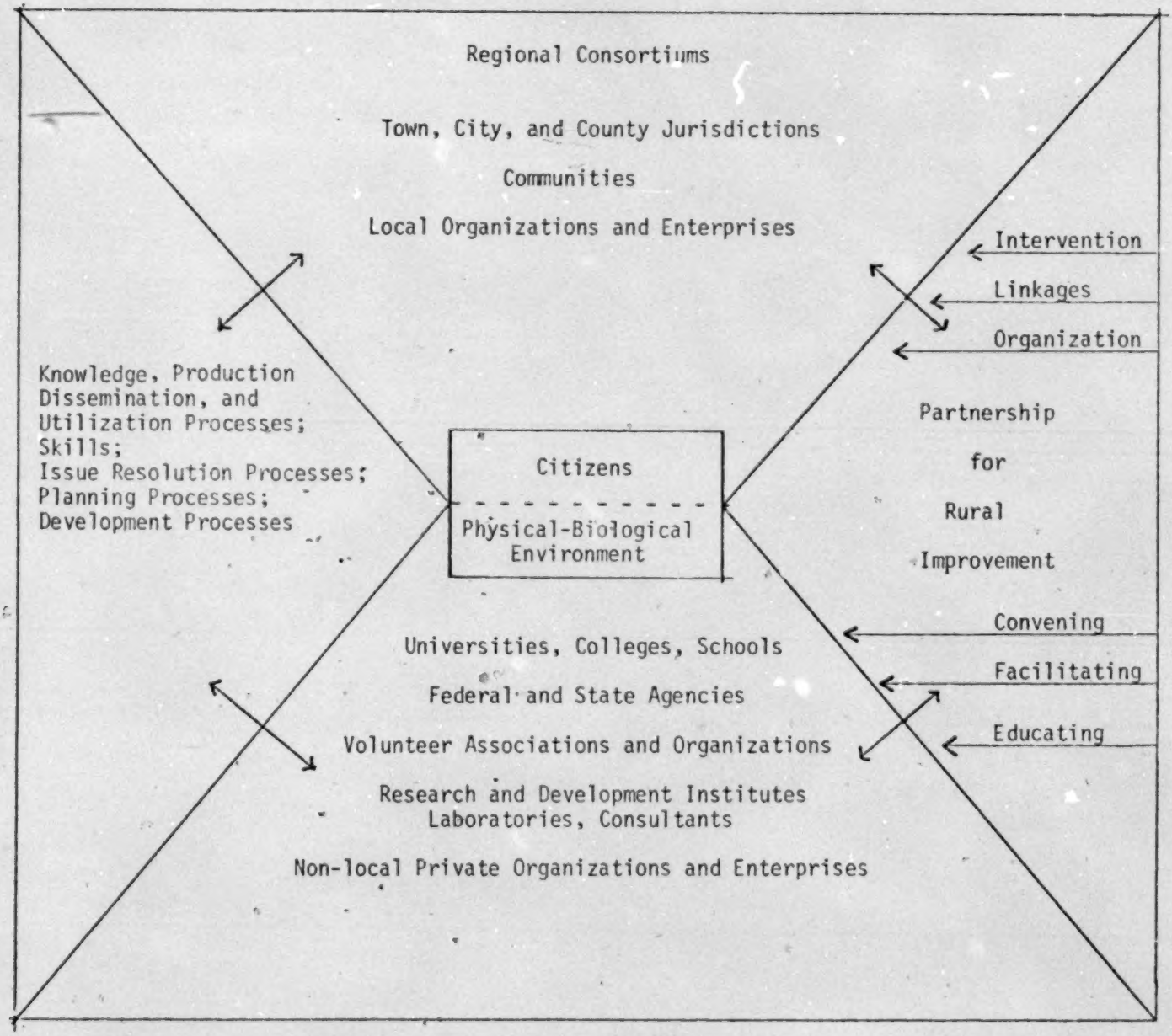


Figure VI. Relationship Between Elements

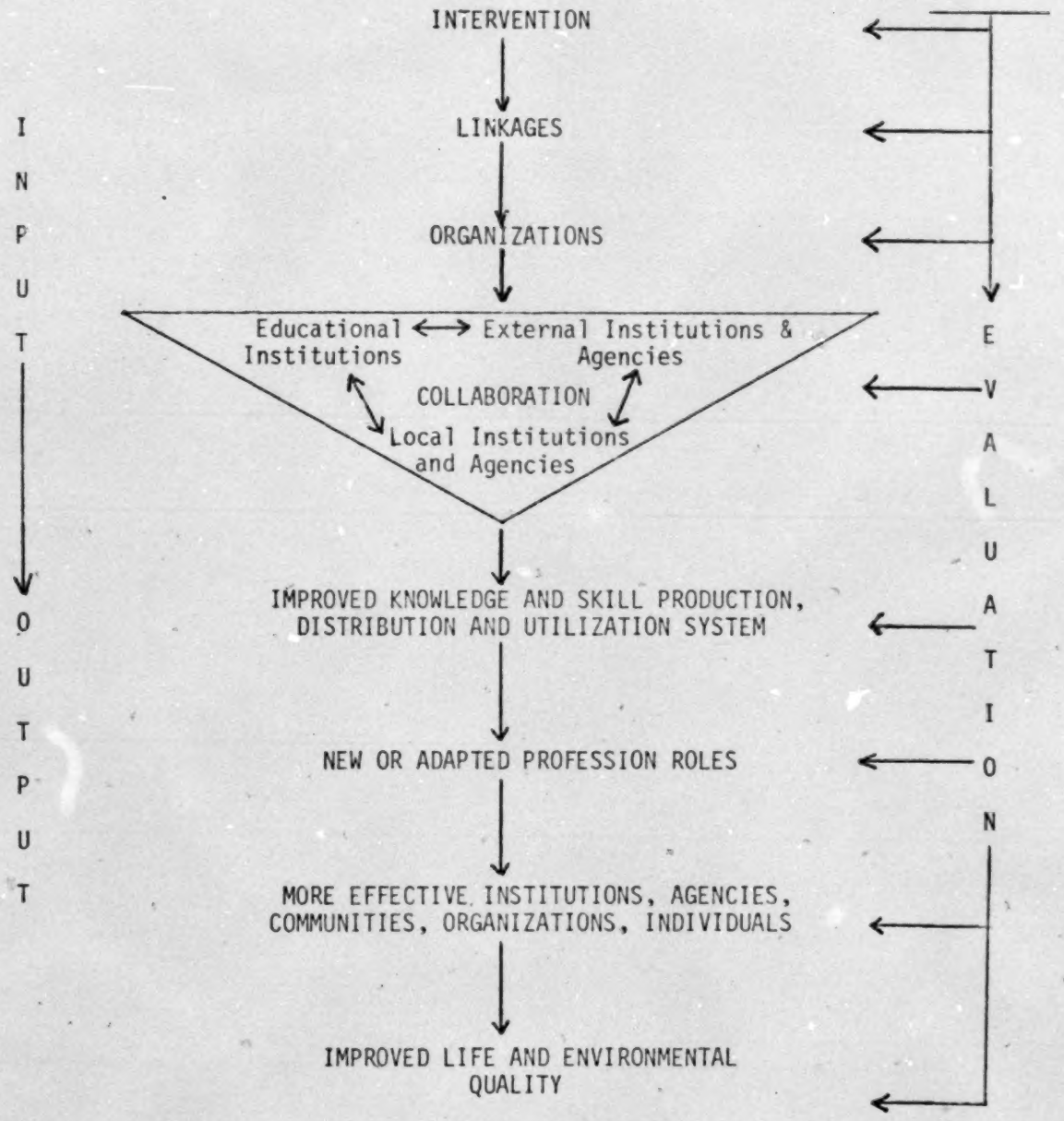


Figure VII. Process Design

Process Phases	Learning		Individual and Institutional Development	Learning
1a Designation of Lead Institutions	↓	↔	1b Designation of Initiating Staff	↓
2a Initiation of Linkages		↔	2b Designation of Linking Representatives	
3a Formation of Consortion or Coalition		↔	3b Selection of Institutional Representatives	
4a Creation of Collaborative Linking Mechanisms - Regional - Sub-Regional		↔	4b Design of Organizational and Leadership Structure	
5a Initiation of Collaborative Programming		↔	5b Selection of Support Staff and Design of Staff Roles - Administration - Knowledge Base Development - Communication - Institutional Development - Educational Design - Evaluation - Research - Intervention - Outreach	
6a Development of Joint Plans and Project Proposals		↔	6b Formation of Sub-Regional Organization and Local Organization Development	
7a Plan Initiation and Project Implementation		↔	7b Design of Appropriate Project Organization; Design and Testing of New Professional Roles	
8a Program Review		↔	8b Design of Forums for Widespread Public Involvement in Program Review; Design of Formal Evaluation System	
9a Re-design of Model Alternatives		↔	9b Formal Structure for Inputing Evaluation and Documentation Results	
10a Testing of Re-designed Alternatives		↔	10b Re-design of Institutional and Field Based Education	
11a Dissemination of Usable Alternatives		↔	11b Design of Transmittable Administrative Structure and Staff Roles	

quality. The mechanisms for enhancement are the organizations and institutions noted in the upper and lower parts of Figure V; at the upper level those units most immediately responsible for local development are noted, while groupings of non-local and potential supporting organizations and institutions are listed below.

Knowledge, skills, issue resolution (or problem-solving) processes, planning processes and development processes are applied through organizations and institutions. The "Partnership for Rural Improvement" is therefore simply a facilitating mechanism to help further develop the tools, organizations, and institutions; the Partnership initiates interventions to establish linkages and organization, convenes collaborative opportunities, facilitates processes and designs new professional roles (see Figure VI).

The program time line is outlined in Figure VII, as a series of "activites" which coincide roughly with "organizational development stages". Phase 1 requires designation of the lead institutions and initiating staff. Phase 2 builds the linkages and requires the designation of initial linking representatives from each institution. The third phase undertakes formation of consortia and selection of a representative for each institution. Phase 4 requires the creation of collaborative mechanisms and includes the design of an organizational and leadership structure on a regionwide and subregional basis. Phase 5 initiates collaborative programming.

Joint programs are developed and initiated through the collaborative efforts of institutions. Program review is undertaken on an annual basis,

and includes "forums" that bring together public officials, educators, and local citizens for critical examination of rural development concepts. Redesign of model alternatives arises from knowledge and experience gained in earlier phases and requires an evaluation structure that enables the entire design to be adequately examined.

Evaluation and Research

Since the program contains multiple goals involving institutional, agency, and community change, each with developmental strategies, the evaluation of activities assumed to lead to these multiple outcomes is formidable. The primary means used to evaluate the program may be termed "process oriented qualitative research" (Rossi and Williams, 1972:34; Weiss, 1972). The approach is characterized by reliance upon post-evaluation surveys, participant observation, and archival, episodic, and private record documentation (Webb et al., 1966).

The descriptive material gathered by this process will serve two major functions. First, the method allows for periodic appraisal of program development through assessment at arbitrary points in time. In this sense, it can be used by the program administrator as a supplement to his and other staff perceptions of program intervention in the 11-county region. Intervention in this instance is similar to the stimulus introduced in an experimental design. To the extent that a systematic description of the interventions is possible, and various activities traceable, the effects of the intervention on outcome goals may be assessed.

The evaluation design involves several major thrusts:

1. Process description and critical incident analysis;
2. Outcome analysis;
3. Pre- and post-measurements of (a) organizational linkage and collaboration, (b) jurisdictional planning-development organization and process, and (c) agency staff perceptions of effective collaborative procedures focusing on rural development;
4. Assessment of effectiveness for specific events (such as educational endeavors);
5. Focused evaluation events designed to review and adjust program direction, based in part on data but also relying on rigorous examination of participant experience in program implementation;
6. Comparisons between geographic sub-regions each of which is using alternative strategies for implementing a total program and individual projects; and
7. Assessment of the relative utility of the PRI model as compared to alternative rural planning and development models under test elsewhere in the United States.

Process description and critical incident analysis will document events in each major phase of the program (as noted in Figures VI and VII). This approach is based on a systematized monitoring system that secures descriptions of activities as they are recorded or recalled by key participants (Rossi and Williams, 1972; Mackeracher, Davie and Patterson, 1976). The method allows for periodic assessment during program developmental stages and serves as a description of interventions in the target geographic region; consequences

or outcomes of interventions can be evaluated based upon overlapping indicators and consensus perceptions of effectiveness.

Outcome evaluation employs data collection designs to measure specific changes arising from operationalized goals or objectives. The evaluation may occur in the form of a rigorous case study of a limited number of observable variables or actions forming an event; or, a major field experiment may be evaluated in which selected indicators are used to assess goal achievement (such as a development project focusing on improvement of community facilities in a selected rural jurisdiction). Outcome evaluation will attempt to measure specific changes or developments in organizational arrangements among collaborating institutions and within subparts of the principal participating organizations. Programs focusing on social change or institutional development of this order require sufficient flexibility, and possibly less experimental rigor, to allow for unforeseen alterations in programmed events or processes (Weiss, 1972).

Pre-and post-measurements will be undertaken in part on the basis of data currently available from earlier research in the target region; this includes measurements of inter-organizational relationships and collaboration among local agency leaders (Fernandez, 1977) and local planning agency organization, programs and methods (Lassey, Barron, and Ditwiler, 1977). Other evaluation procedures will rely on extensions of the measurement strategies already discussed or will require original designs not yet developed in detail.

Additional evaluative or research efforts will emerge through faculty

or student initiated projects arising from funded research, theses or dissertations; several proposals for such activity are in preparation.

Finally, the program time-line calls for dissemination of tested products. The published results will eventually include:

1) a set of guidelines on achieving and maintaining collaboration among institutions and communities;
2) a set of documents that describe the appropriate strategies and required resources;
3) a description of alternative research and development systems that will presumably be more effective in the production, distribution, and utilization of knowledge applicable to rural development;
4) a formal model outlining alternative tested organizational designs, processes and methods for achieving and maintaining a rural planning and development system.

Review of Program Progress

Development of a basis for the Partnership for Rural Improvement began well before the request for funding was formally submitted to the Kellogg Foundation in September, 1975. Consultation with officials of institutions and agencies projected to be involved (Figure VII, phase 1) contributed to the proposal design. Informal surveys and formal interviews enabled the proposal writers to secure extensive participation in assessing the potential for improved rural development strategies. Formal letters of comment submitted with the proposal offered firm indication that support for the underlying concepts was wide-ranging and firm among institutional and local officials.

The tone for the collaborative effort had thus been established;

representatives of several institutions, agencies, and local jurisdictions considered themselves "partners" before the implementing grant was received. A variety of interactions across and between potential collaborators were designed and implemented. This served to facilitate program implementation (Figure VII, phase 2). Linkages were formally initiated in a planning session attended by about 20 potential partners and were strengthened through widespread participation in an on-site Kellogg Foundation review.

Washington State University designated five faculty members and their administrative counterparts as a working advisory group to prepare early plans for implementation (Figure VII, phase 2b). Position descriptions were written for permanent staff. Administrative structures were discussed and tentatively designed. Sessions were held with potential collaborators to discuss plans for program implementation. When the program was formally announced the Partnership was already partially underway.

The formal launching occurred at a three-day conference in early June, 1976 (Figure VII, phase 3). In retrospect, it was this educationally intensive and generally stimulating experience which provided the common ground for solidifying commitment to a collaborative mode. The "Camp Field" meetings have become the initial reference point from which increased trust, effective organization, and greater mutual empathy among members of the Partnership evolved.

Careful design preceded the conference. Major issues to be resolved were part of the formal agenda: How could the University as recipient of the grant avoid domination of the program? How could ownership be equitably

shared? How could participants leave the conference with common perceptions about the goals and strategies of the program? Participants pursued greater awareness of the program's potential, while increasing their appreciation of the organizational matrix.

Three significant decisions were made by the conference participants. First, they agreed to create three sub-regions within the 13-county region and to organize accordingly. These sub-divisions (based on community college district boundaries) were created expressly to expand involvement in PRI and to achieve greater local perspective, while providing the basis for local capacity building. Second, the conference agreed to the initial organizational pattern for only a six-month period. This allowed for openness to a potentially more appropriate guidance structure. Finally, the conference culminated with the structuring and appointment of a region-wide "policy council" comprised of elected representatives from the conference constituencies. The members of the conference were formally designated as the program "advisory group".

During the initial six-month period the advisory group and policy council faced issues of policy formulation, distribution of resources, and organization building from a regional perspective. The less formalized sub-regional units explored means of activating the Partnership to fit their unique concerns (Figure VII, phase 4). At each of the interaction points in the evolving structure, members of the Partnership developed a series of "process" practices. Group agenda-building, consensus decision-making, and process observation have become routinized. The design was intended to make each working session of these groups educational as well as decision and progress oriented.

Several indicators of achievement characterized this initial period. The program staff at Washington State University was selected from a variety of campus units rather than allowing the program to draw largely from a single department or college. Faculty agreed to primary responsibilities (Figure VII, phase 5b) but with the clear understanding that, individually and collectively, the staff was to be interdisciplinary. Two staff members were headquartered on the campuses of community colleges with split appointments between the community college and Washington State University.

A contract with the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (headquarted in Portland, Oregon) provides process guidance and training design. Educational materials developed earlier by the Laboratory are being adapted specifically for application to rural development programs.

Other activities characterizing early phases of PRI include: (1) The development and implementation of guidelines for collaborative programming (Figure VII, phase 5); this has led to the identification of specific action projects within each of the sub-regions on which the Partnership is now working; (2) the development of a policy document which describes the agreements, structure and an initial operating procedure; and (3) expansion of participation and increased mutual understanding between participating individuals and institutions. The Partnership is currently (Summer, 1977) at the point of joint planning and project development (Figure VII, phase 6).

The program has not been without its moments of tension. Differences of opinion were evident when proposals were made to distribute funds to

participating institutions as a means to facilitate their involvement in PRI. Extensive discussion centered on the thorny issue of "buying participation".

The temporary region-wide advisory and policy groups have been replaced by a more permanent Regional Coordinating Committee. The sub-regional units are at work on projects which focus on critical issues and which activate resources from the entire Partnership. The first PRI Public Forum reviewed rural development priorities from national, state, and local perspectives and attracted participants from throughout the region.

The program strategy is developmental. As knowledge, skill, and experience accumulate, adjustments will be deliberately implemented. The program will continually remain in a state of tension between adherence to the tentative model that launched the program and the intent to discover an improved approach to rural planning and development.

The initial model and strategy is based heavily on what appear to be useful and tested models arising from prior research or experience; a four year initial test and evaluated results will hopefully produce a new model, or alternative models, which benefit from previous efforts, while producing an additional increment of completeness in rural development organization, process, and achievement.

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